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THE SOCIALIST VICTORY IN JAPAN

by Kiyoshi K. Kawakami

Since the surrender no single political development in Japan has personally heartened me so much as the victory of the Social Democratic Party at the polls in April and the consequent all but unanimous choice by both Houses of the Diet of the high-minded Socialist leader, Tetsu Katayama, as Prime Minister.

The victory is a victory of the party's Right Wing, holding to the Fabian school of Socialism. This was the tenet of the first and quickly suppressed Japanese Social Democratic Party, of whose charter members Professor Isoh Abe of Tokyo and myself are now the only survivors.

No relation of Sen Katayama, one of the original Social Democrats who turned Communist and died in Moscow in 1932, Premier Tetsu Katayama is a new type of Japanese politician -- quiet, idealistic, abstemious, animated by faith in humanitarian democracy and individual liberty.

Perhaps Katayama's simplicity and sincerity are rooted in his Christian religion as well as in his Shinto ancestry, for those virtues are the twin pillars of Shintoism on the ethical side. The new Premier's grandfather was a Shinto priest and his grandmother a Christian, and he himself grew up to be a devout adherent of the Western creed. A graduate of the Tokyo Imperial University, he has been a practicing lawyer, and has served three terms in the House of Representatives.

It is largely Katayama's unquestioned sincerity and his record of unselfish work which have kept his party from being pulled asunder by Rightest and Leftist tendencies. Under another leadership the Left Wing might have joined hands with the Communists, in spite of the repeated warning sounded by the occupation authorities against the perils of Communism. Even now that possibility is not entirely dissipated.

Immediately following the Allied emancipation of all the political elements in Japan, the Socialists were unquestionably inclined to the Left. By September, 1946, largely due to the restraining influence of the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP), the trend had veered toward the Center. Suehiro Nishio, a hard-bitten labor unionist, a former factory worker and an experienced politician, having served in

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the Diet five terms, now works closely with Katayama as Secretary-General of the Social Democratic Party.

II

The present Social Democratic Party came into being soon after the surrender and the liberation of Japanese political thought which followed. But it possessed a background of half a century, during which Socialism had been rigorously suppressed. In less than two years the party has become the largest single political group in the Lower House of the Diet. This shows how far away from the old regime Japan has travelled during the period of occupation.

The Socialists now have 144 seats in the House of Representatives as compared with 131 Liberals and 127 Democrats. In the House of Councillors there are 46 Socialists, 40 Liberals and 31 Democrats.

Thus, although the Socialists have a small plurality in both Houses, they can be easily defeated in the halls of the legislature if the two conservative parties, the Liberals and Democrats, choose to join forces against them.

Fortunately for the Socialists, they are assured of the wholehearted co-operation of the Democrats, for in the present Cabinet the two parties are equally represented under the new Socialist Premier. The coalition, joined by the People's Co-operative Party, controls an absolute majority in the House of Representatives.

The Liberals, headed by Shigeru Yoshida, the predecessor of Katayama as Premier, refused to enter the coalition. The Liberals assert that they cannot share responsibilities with a Cabinet whose dominant party includes Leftists who might not hesitate to divulge State secrets to Moscow. Yoshida is not satisfied with Premier Katayama's exclusion of Leftists from his Cabinet, but insists that the Socialist Party purge itself of all Left Wingers, at least from its various committees. This Katayama refuses to do.

In order to secure the Democrats' co-operation the Socialists are not now insisting upon a socialistic program. This the conservatives cannot accept even when it is advocated as in the interest of the national unity which Japan must have in order to tide over the critical period preceding and following the peace conference, still unscheduled.

The Socialists are also naturally mindful of the attitude of SCAP, which, while approving of Katayama as Premier, has made it clear that it frowns upon any radical swing to the Left. This restraint perhaps is no bitter pill for Katayama and his fellow Fabians to swallow. For

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the Fabians are patient and believe in evolution as a sure, if slow, process of social reconstruction.

III

When Katayama was re-elected as party president at the convention of September, 1946, he declared that his party would take "neither a Rightist nor a Leftist course." The same convention adopted a Centrist program whose main features were: (1) Confiscation of wartime profits; (2) Redistribution of wealth by graduated taxation; (3) Amalgamation of labor and farmers' unions; (4) Establishment of a labor ministry; (5) State management of coal pits and gradual nationalization of coal mines; (6) Participation in U. N. and in the International Labor Office; and (7) Establishment of a world federation of all Socialist parties.

To these planks the platform issued just before the recent elections adds: (1) Repudiation of interest on wartime government bonds; (2) Stabilization of the new currency; (3) Government regulation of major industries with a view to eventual nationalization; and (4) Taxing black market profiteers out of existence.

Some of these proposals may either prove impossible or will have to be discarded for the present because they may not be approved by SCAP, and also because the Cabinet is a coalition with the Rightist Democratic Party and Co-operatives.

Undoubtedly the Socialist leaders grasped the opportunity to form a Cabinet, even admitting strange bedfellows, in part because of their desire to gain the administrative experience in which they are obviously deficient. The apparently precarious political combination, if it continues to enjoy the blessings of the occupation authorities, may persevere until after the peace treaty is concluded.

The peace conference with Japan may come sooner than had been thought possible. Mr. Dean Acheson, just before his resignation as Under Secretary of State, declared that the United States, in the absence of Four Power agreements, must proceed unilaterally for the reconstruction of Japan and Germany. General MacArthur himself, as far back as March 17, publicly stated that "the days of SCAP should cease completely with a peace treaty because I think conditions are ripe for it now." And former President Hoover, in his letter of May 27 to Representative Taber, urges an immediate peace conference with Japan.

IV

One aspect of the recent Japanese elections which calls for more than passing notice is the setback suffered by the Communist Party.

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It would be premature to conclude that the Communist influence in Japan is definitely on the downgrade. True, the Red votes, at the national election of April 25, decreased to about a million, from 1,729,000 a year ago. But for several reasons, including the effort necessary to obtain food, the same decline affected all parties.

Thus the Socialist votes decreased from 9,748,000 in 1946 to 6,600,000 this year. The Liberal votes were cut to substantially less than half of those in 1946. Democrats (until recently called Progressives) polled 6,700,000 compared with last year's 10,527,000.

Despite the emphatic disapproval of Communism expressed by the American occupation authorities, the Communists returned four candidates each to the Upper and Lower Houses of the Diet. They had put in the field 121 candidates for the House of Representatives and 53 for the House of Councillors, thus fully exploiting the election campaign.

If Japan is not a hotbed for Communism, neither is it barren soil. If the conclusion of peace is delayed too long, with the consequent prolongation of the economic dislocation now keeping the nation prostrate, the Communists will have a continuing advantage in that situation.

General MacArthur is right in saying that SCAP should end with the return of peace. Yet the sudden termination of his restraining influence, before Japan's economic situation has materially improved, might easily encourage Communist resurgence.

Meanwhile Sanzo Nosaka, the Maurice Thorez of Japan, is working hard to make the Communist Party "likeable." He seems to disapprove of the strategy of his embattled colleagues, who have antagonized the general public by instigating strikes and in many other ways. With more political finesse the Japanese Communists may yet stage a comeback.

It is also possible that if Katayama and his "Centrist" colleagues concede too much to the conservatives, the Left Wing Socialists may form a separate political group, even though they may not openly enter the Communist fold. The Left Wing claims that it has 52 seats and is supported by 17 other "sympathizers" in the House of Representatives. These figures are disputed by the Right Wing which claims that it controls 80 percent of the Socialist votes in the House.

Premier Katayama will certainly endeavor to keep his party intact. Whether he can do so, or whether ex-Premier Yoshida is wise in demanding the "cleansing" of the Socialist Party, time alone can tell. The delicate balance of Japanese politics, in any case, is a factor of much more than local importance in the uneasy post-war world.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. IV, NO. 23

By Frank C. Hanighen June 4, 1947

Although Dewey's bid for the Presidential nomination is in the ascendant, the Taft camp has by no means struck its banners. It is believed that the Senator would make the best impression at small gatherings with "common people" rather than at mass rallies; and by talking with groups of community leaders out in the country. His appearance before the publishers' convention in New York in April was deemed most successful; as always he answered questions honestly and freely, and gave the publishers the feeling that "this is the man who knows Government."

But the over-all Taft strategy still seems to be that of pledging delegates for the convention. Lining up friends for nominating day is all very well, observers comment, but it does not guarantee victory. If there exists a popular sentiment that Dewey is the man to win in '48, then the delegates will somehow get un-pledged by the time the roll is called.

The best way to stop Dewey, say these observers, is for Taft to enter the Wisconsin primaries next April. It is recalled that in 1944 Dewey went into Wisconsin to oppose Willkie and won. He put an end to the Willkie boom and paved the way for his own nomination. Taft, it is argued, should follow this course against Dewey next spring. He would, of course, have to prepare the ground carefully.

The Ohioan, it is believed, would have an excellent chance in Wisconsin. That state is somewhat like Ohio; both are approximately half-industrial, half-agricultural; and both have much the same racial groups. It is true that the Republican boss, Coleman, supports Stassen. But in Wisconsin the rank and file particularly admire a fight against a state machine. In a primary, it is the old-line Republicans who go to the polls; and this element is more likely to favor Taft than Dewey.

If Taft, won the Wisconsin primaries, it is argued, he would do more than "stop Dewey," he would start a nation-wide sweep which would bring him the nomination. Of course, it is conceded that the step involves great risks; that if Taft were defeated in Wisconsin, his chances for winning the nomination would very sharply diminish. But since Taft's prospects have been stagnant for some months, the gamble should be taken. He cannot merely line up delegates; he must show some ability to stop Dewey at the polls. If these calculations are sound, then it is next spring or never for Ohio's favorite son.

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After Hungary, Czechoslovakia? Or Italy? Such are the questions under discussion in Washington diplomatic gatherings. Soviet Russia is obviously battening down the hatches in Central Europe, and the Magyar country to date has been an unconsolidated part of the Soviet position. Preparations for last week's coup in Budapest had been under way for some time, and the State Department was not surprised. But now there is worried speculation about Hungary's neighbor, Czechoslovakia, once known as the eastern bastion of democratic thought.

Paul Ward in the Baltimore Sun (June 4) notes that Andrei Y. Vishinsky, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, has arrived in Prague and Ward reports that State Department circles are wondering whether something like the Hungarian seizure of power may not occur there. "Remembering the vigor displayed by Mr. Vishinsky during the recent Moscow conference, they are disposed to discount reports that he has gone there for his health. They recalled that it was Mr. Vishinsky who personally engineered the Communist coup in Romania." There has been trouble lining up the Slovaks behind the Prague Government and recently a cladestine Slovak radio has started broadcasting.

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Regardless of President Truman's action with respect to the contentious tax measure which Congress tossed into his lap, one aspect of the legislation continues to stand out. It was passed after a thorough and intelligent exchange of views and arguments by both sides in the Senate and House. It would, of course, be unrealistic to say that political considerations were absent. But, from January onward, the Congressional debaters pro and con generally shifted their arguments from the demagogic level of "soak the rich" or "soak the poor" to the much higher plane of "what is best for the country's economy."

Those who advocated higher exemptions or especially lower rates for the masses came finally to base their arguments on "stimulation of mass purchasing power." On this ground, they joined battle fairly with those, like Congressman Knutson, who believe that an "across the board" tax relief would bring about this same desirable objective. Knutson is convinced that sharp tax reduction in the higher brackets would free funds for investment; and that this would do much to create more employment, rising wages and consequently greater mass purchasing power. In short, the two sides reached agreement on the basic fiscal philosophy, differing only on the means of reaching this common end.

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It is hoped by many that the man named to head our mission to Greece will be a conservative or independent. But, even so, he will become the "captive" of his staff, as things are now going. Close observers of the State Department and Foreign Service, say that the staff has already been formed and contains many fellow travellers and the old appease-Russia-and-Communism crowd.

It is a commonplace in Washington that any administrator, unless he picks his subordinates, loses control at the outset. A number of otherwise well-intentioned administrators, who ignored this rule, have come to grief. Among them were Elmer Davis, who walked into captivity in the OWI, and Mr. William Benton, head of the much-criticized State Department Division of Public Affairs. In short, unless the prospective head of our Greek regime stipulates that he can name his own personnel, he is in for trouble.

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The President's civilian commission on defense came out with a recommendation of a plan for universal military training after a group of Members of Congress had issued a statement directly to the contrary. There is some opinion in Washington that the President's commission was "sold a pup" by the General Staff, and that Members of Congress were soundly prompted by unofficial, but military criticism of the whole UMT plan. This column on March 26 noted professional objections to UMT, as follows: that UMT's six-month training plan would produce only half-trained, raw, soldier material; that in the next few years we do not need a supply of trained men for a mass army (the kind of army envisioned by UMT) because the war veterans already constitute such a reserve; that in the long run military strategy is likely to be of the "push-button-war" character in which mass armies will not be the decisive element; that appropriations for UMT would starve other services, intelligence and scientific development, vital to our preparations at the present time; and that finally UMT would result in a breakdown instead of a building-up of our defense services.

Since our publication of this criticism, Hanson Baldwin, Military Editor of the New York Times has attacked (Times, May 4) UMT on the same grounds, saying that it "is a very dubious form of security, if, indeed, it offers any security at all in this technological and industrial age. UMT by its very size and cost may build up the shadow of security without its substance; there is grave danger we may create in our military psychology a Maginot Line concept. Air power, missiles, new weapons and sea power must have priority." Baldwin lays emphasis on the neces-

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sity for regular forces, highly trained and instantly ready for action, rather than on a half-trained army like that which would result from UMT. He quotes Maj. Gen. John S. Wood, wartime commander of the Fourth Armored Division, who says that UMT "will not produce a single unit ready to fight or a single fighting man for immediate use."

Military observers who oppose UMT, however, have not ruled out the possibility of employing the draft again in the next year or two. There have been signs that voluntary enlistments will fall short of keeping up our foreign occupation forces. If this should prove true, then a revival of the selective service system will be necessary. But "not UMT," they say.

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"The trouble with the Voice of America," remarked the Senator, in an after-dinner, oracular mood, "is that there isn't and can't be any one Voice of America. Such voices are legion. Yours is one, mine is another. Only the President, in his official capacity, has the right to speak for America. And even Harry Truman wouldn't claim that his is necessarily the best interpretation of the American way of life."

"That's it," chimed in the journalist, "Government broadcasting ought to be confined to giving forth only Presidential and other official announcements. None of that 'way of life' stuff. It's a waste of time."

The diplomat raised his cigar in objection, "But how will we influence foreign opinion?"

"Well," said the Senator, "That's your business. The head of our diplomatic mission in any country should make known our policy and cultivate friendship for the U.S.A. He has the position and influence to do the job."

"You've got something there," agreed the diplomat. "Now when I was Minister to ----, I delegated one secretary to make friends with the Fascist elements, another to cultivate the Communists. They brought me good information as to what those crowds were doing, and meanwhile they headed off much criticism of the U.S.A. in both quarters. In fact my scheme worked so well that I got complaints from Washington that I was harboring Fascists and Communists among my staff."

"There are other ways," said the journalist, knowingly. "We could influence France, for instance, in the following manner. The French are affected more by radio programs from small adjoining countries than by their own or by American, British or Russian. They like Radio Andorra, Radio Luxembourg and the Swiss stations. However, we wouldn't have to buy those stations. Just have our local diplomatic representatives cultivate the commentators. I mean give them a good news break straight from Washington every now and then. Nothing like a news tip to tie a journalist to you. And it wouldn't cost a cent."

A guttural voice, the Professor's, broke in: "You want to influence Russians? I am a Russian, a White Russian, but I know them. Russia is an Asiatic country. Under the Czar, they paid no attention to what Petrograd said, nor the gazettes. They only paid attention to gossip they heard in the bazaar. The bazaar is still the real source of news and views for the Russian people today. You can't get your ideas to the bazaar" -- everyone was fascinated by his pronunciation of that word -- "over your radio or with your propaganda pamphlets. Russians wouldn't pay any attention, even if they heard what you said.

"So, where are you with Voice of America? In Western Europe, you see, there are better ways of doing the job. In Eastern Europe, the NKVD won't let your agents into the bazaars. So you might as well -- to use a Soviet term -- liquidate the Voice of America and be done with it."

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Notes and Quotes

American capitalists who rather neurotically worry about whether they can "make capitalism work" might improve their mental health by reading the following tribute which comes surprisingly from the Left Wing Socialist weekly, Tribune (London, March 28). "It is not only the greater wealth and power of the United States but the distinctively modern type of its industrial and social organization which attracts many of the most vital and energetic groups in the more backward countries and thereby makes American capitalism appear as a genuinely progressive alternative to the Soviet system.

"Because the Labour Government has continued the policy of identifying Britain with retrograde, parasitical, anti-industrial interests, and because British military and financial power is now inadequate to back this choice, Britain is temporarily out of the running . . . Socialists can do something to help by clearing their own minds of cant about the menace of 'reactionary American imperialism' penetrating into countries which a year and a half ago looked for a progressive lead to Labour Britain, and looked in vain. It is not their fault, nor that of Mr. Truman, if 'Wall Street' is now called upon to modernize backward countries which would gladly have accepted British help in cleaning their Augean stables. Capital, as Marxists should know, is not always unprogressive."

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One of the beguiling features of the Passing Show of Washington is the affectionate, although not always selfless, relationship between bureaucrats and journalists. Their teamwork is often excellent. In the Washington Daily News (May 24) a local item is headed "Uranium Ore Found in West" and began: "Sizable deposits of ore containing uranium -- source of atomic energy -- have been found in the Colorado River Basin area." If true, this is of great interest. But what is the authority for the statement? None is definitely indicated.

But a clue as to the source of the information peeps out coyly way down in the story: "Skilled crews of the U. S. Geological Surveys have been combing the West [for uranium]. One official familiar with their work said they'd been successful." Now the Geological Survey is in the Interior Department and that department has been literally shaking with fear of the economy cuts. And so the final paragraph is in more than one sense of the word the "pay-off": "Interior officials are concerned over the effect of appropriation cuts -- if they stand -- on their search for uranium. Geological Survey has been drastically cut by the House and Secretary Krug has warned this may imperil national security." Maybe, but it certainly imperils jobs.

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"The worst crime of the week," declares Norman Thomas in The Call (May 28), "against democracy and fair play was committed by James Newman, American military governor of the state of Hesse, who, according to news dispatches, threatened to invoke the death penalty against participants in strikes and hunger demonstrations. How Hitler's ghost must laugh at this way of teaching democracy!

"The Anglo-American decision to get tough in Germany is allegedly based on the hoarding of food by peasants and the universality of black markets. It is true that black markets should be suppressed, and that peasants shouldn't hoard food, but both practices are not peculiar to Germany. The same newspaper in which I read a denunciation of the Germans carried a story about black markets in France, and a statement that the French peasants were planting only one-fifth as much wheat as before the war, because wheat prices are more rigorously controlled than other products."

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